

Testimony in Support of H.B. 5033, An Act Addressing the Needs of Food-Insecure Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Joy and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for H.B. 5033, an Act addressing the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. This bill would require public institutions of higher education to assess and address food insecurity among students and to increase access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for eligible students at institutions of higher education.

Black and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. A study done by the University of Connecticut estimated that around 35% of Connecticut college students suffer from food insecurities. Amongst these alarming statistics, black students constitute fifty-eight percent, which is 19% higher than the overall rate for students identifying as White or Caucasian. Students experiencing food insecurity have a lower average GPA, and higher rates of depression and nutrition deficiencies.

According to The UConn Today, a survey that found 35% of students at UConn Storrs suffer from food insecurity, with higher numbers at regional campuses. Furthermore, a study at Eastern Connecticut State University found that approximately 35 percent of students reported not having access to enough nutritious food and a study at Southern Connecticut State found that about 30 percent of undergraduate college students were food insecure. Students enrolled more than half-time must work at least 20 hours a week to be eligible for SNAP, but a GAO report from last year showed almost 2 million college students who are potentially eligible have not reported receiving SNAP, many of whom are dissuaded from even applying because of the cryptic language that explains which students can get benefits. This is unsustainable and inhumane.

I urge you to address the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. The consequences of food insecurity impact their ability to perform well in and out of school and have a life-long impact on their development and livelihood. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Higher Education Committee so that these individuals have a chance at fulfilling their best potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Joy Liu
New Haven, CT